

Sally Port and Chapel of San Felipe del Morro  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

HABS No. PR-55

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
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SALLY PORT AND CHAPEL  
SAN FELIPE DEL MORRO

Owner: Federal Government, U. S. Department of the Army.

Date of  
Erection: The Chapel and the present elevation of the Sally Port date from the period 1784-1787 and are part of addition to the outer walls of El Morro. These latter originate from the end of the 16th century.

Architect: The plans for the addition mentioned above were prepared by Juan Francisco Maestre.

Builders: Corps of Engineers, Spanish Army.

Present  
Condition: Both Sally Port and Chapel appear to be in good structural condition. The original finishes, however, are badly deteriorated, especially on the Chapel facade and the interior of the Sally Port and the pavements of the bridge, the Sally Port and the gundeck.

There have been several changes to the Sally Port and the adjoining wall. During World War II a bomb shelter was constructed in the dry moat immediately north of the Sally Port. Its roof was brought up to the level of the bridge across the dry moat and against its north side, blocking the four arches closest to El Morro.

A drawbridge located at the Sally Port and spanning a distance corresponding to the width of the arch nearest to El Morro was removed sometime between 1860 and 1896. The existing arch is a replacement executed in the 1930 of an earlier one presumably built at the time of the removal of the drawbridge. Several repairs have been made to the Chapel during the years. In the early 30's the interior was replastered and in 1952 the exterior finishes of the Chapel were

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patched and unfortunately obliterating some of the details of the Frieze. In 1955 the interior of the Chapel was restored.

Number of  
Stories:

The Sally Port and the Chapel are one story only. They are a part of the system of casemates supporting the gundeck of El Caballero. The casemates are all on the same level corresponding to the highest section of the point on which El Morro is built.

Materials  
of  
Construction:

The construction employed for the heavy masonry in this section of El Morro is a shell retaining walls construction with a core of loose fill. The gundeck above the casemates and the bridge across the moat are skin pavements carried on cores of rubble fill supported by arches and shell walls.

In the exterior wall and the outer section of the Sally Port the shell walls and the vaults are made from sandstone blocks approximately 1'-4" x 2'-6", laid in regular coursing. The columns and mouldings of the front of the Sally Port are carved in the same sandstone. All surfaces were stuccoed and given a smooth finish. On the columns and mouldings the stucco was generally applied very thin varying from 1/2 to 3/16 of an inch. The court side of the Sally Port, the bridge, the Chapel and the court elevation of the two are constructed as follows, the lower section of the walls (approximately 4') are made from sandstone blocks, vaults are brick and, except for the moulding and columns of the Chapel front which are carved sandstone similar to the Sally Port front, all other walls are rubble masonry made from fragments of sandstone and brick laid in lime mortar. All walls were stuccoed with a lime stucco and finished smoothly.

With exception of the chapel, the pavements throughout are of a lime mortar cement with a crushed brick aggregate. The pavements are cast monolithically.

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There is a generous amount of patching of the pavements executed in cement mortar. In the Chapel the pavement is of black and white marble tile laid in a checkerboard pattern.

Other  
Existing  
Records:

1. Planta y Modelo del Morro 1591  
Por el Capitan Pedro de Salazar  
Plaza del Castillo  
Original in Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla  
(Patronato 176 Ramo 3)
2. Plano del Castillo de San Felipe del Morro de  
la Plaza de San Juan 1742  
Source - Ministerio del Exterior, Madrid, Spain
3. Plano de la Plaza de San Juan, Puerto Rico.  
Thomas O'Daly 1772, Source, Museo Naval, Madrid,  
Spain (Class No. K-b-10-59).
4. Plano del Castillo del Morro y Recinto Oeste de  
la Plaza de San Juan, Puerto Rico 12 May 1787  
by Juan Francisco Maestre.
5. Planos y Perfiles del Castillo de San Felipe del  
Morro por Don Manuel F. Castro 1860, National  
Archives, Washington.

  
Frederik C. Gjessing, Architect  
Feb-56

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Approved